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KIRE-JI KANA: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF HAIKU[1]

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Haiku, a poetic form characterized by an extreme limitation in length and meter, exhibits some syntactic peculiarities--preference of the predication of nominals over that of verbals and frequent use of certain particles. In an attempt to elucidate the correlations between these linguistic characteristics and the extremely suggestive and imagistic nature of haiku, I have examined some several hundred of traditional haiku from the viewpoint of linguistics, paying particular attention to so-called kire-ji 'cutting words' such as ya and kana.[2] In this paper, for the pragmatic reason that the given space is insufficient to give adequate attention to both, I will focus on kana and the structure in which it occurs and explore interactions between the syntactic rules governing the use of this particle, the metric constraints on haiku and the poetic intention of the art of haiku.

A haiku is made up of three "phrases" (a somewhat undefined term) of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively, and often contains the particle kana or ya, as shown in the following.[3]

1. Tsuri-gane ni/ Tomari-te
   temple bell OBL stop+at=I-&
   nemuru/ Kochoo kana. (Bu. 174)
   sleep=URU butterfly KANA
   'On the temple bell, Has settled and is asleep, A butterfly!'

2. Furu-ike ya/ Kawazu tobikomu/
   old-pond YA frog jump+in=URU
   Mizu no oto. (Ba:77)
   water ASS sound
   'Old pond--And a frog-jump-in water-sound

Although the particles kana and ya carry no lexical meanings, they occur in haiku with sufficiently noteworthy frequency as seen in the following table:[4]

	Basho	Buson
Total	202	274
With kana	46 (22.7%)	70 (25.1%)
With ya	62 (36.7%)	119 (45.0%)

Haiku with ya and kana

Unlike particles such as wa, ga, no, and ni, kana and ya belong to the grammar of Classical Japanese and are no longer in general use in Modern Japanese.[5] Interestingly, however, they continue to be used even in modern haiku in which the major lexical morphemes may be quite modern (e.g., kisha 'steam car/train' and gasorin-sutando 'gas station' are used in the haiku composed by contemporary poets). Less obvious but perhaps more important is the fact that neither ya nor kana has ever gained as much popularity in tanka (the 5-7-5-7-7-syllable poetry) as in haiku. There seems to be good reason for suspecting that these particles have properties that contribute to the poetic values of haiku, such as suggestiveness and imagism.

There are a couple of facts that should be noted about the distribution of kana. First, kana is always placed in the final position while ya typically occurs in the fifth syllable position and only occasionally in the middle or at the end of the second phrase or at the end of the last phrase. Second, kana almost always follows an NP (a noun or a noun equivalent). The following two are the only seemingly exceptional cases that the data I have been examining contains.

3. Haru no umi/ Hinemosu notari-/
   spring ASS sea all+day+long undulating-
   notari kana. (Bu:109)
   undulating KANA
   'The spring sea: ALL day long up-and-down, Up-and-down.'

4. Futa-moto no/ Ume ni Chi-
   two-tree ASS plum OBL lateness-
   soku o / aisu kana. (Bu:182)
   earliness DO love=U KANA
   'Two plum trees, Late and early bloomers, I love them both!'

The notari-notari in (3) is a mimetic word describing a heavy and slow motion. Mimetic words are abundant in Japanese, Classical or Modern, and they are usually used as adjectives or adverbs. When they are used as predicate adjectives, they are normally followed by a copula like nominal adjectives (Keiyo Doshi) are.[6] The following examples show this distributional similarity between mimetic words and nominal adjectives.

5. A no hito wa aware dusu.
   That person TOP pitiful COP
   'That person is pitiful.'

6. Ano hito wa bero- bero desu.
   That person TOP drunk-drunk COP
   'That person is very drunk.'

The nominal adjectives aware can occur in typical nominal positions such as the subject and object positions. Therefore, one can indirectly prove that a mimetic word has some noun properties even if it is not normally used as a noun. In other words, a haiku like (3) does not prevent us from making the generalization that kana follows an NP. What is more problematic is a case like (4), in which kana follows aisu, the Final Form (Shushi-kei) rather than aisuru, the Nominal Form. It is

necessary at this point to recall that Classical Japanese has no nominalizers like Modern Japanese *no* and *koto* but distinguishes nominal clauses from other types of clauses by virtue of the conjugation of the verbal element in the clause final position, i.e., by the Nominal Form. Since the Final Form occurs most typically in the final position of independent sentences except sentence final particles, haiku like the one in (3) must be analyzed as (S - *kana*) in the frameworks of Classical Japanese grammar and constitutes a true counterexample to the generalization in question. The situation would be further complicated, given the fact that there are a fairly large number of *haiku*, in which the verb in the position preceding *kana* is clearly in the Nominal Form (e.g., Basho: 747; Buson: 541, 549; Issa: 217, 232). One might conclude that *kana* follows either an NP or an S. However, such a conclusion would lead into a further difficult question concerning the differences between NP-*kana* and S-*kana*. I propose to maintain the generalization that *kana* follows an NP and ask why the Final Form is exceptionally used in the cases like (4). An answer that I would like to suggest here is the following: because the Nominal Form *aisuru* is longer than the Final Form *aisu* by one syllable, the metric rule of 5-7-5 syllables would be violated if the morphologically appropriate form *aisuru* is chosen whether *kana* is added to it or not--the resultant phrase would be a six- or four-syllable phrase--while the Final Form plus *kana* makes exactly five syllables. In fact, a traditional haiku poet is always confronted with a choice between the metric balance and lexical or morpho-syntactic appropriateness. In the process of composing the haiku in (4), the metric rule must have overriden the morphological rule, because the rule involved here is more negotiable than the metric rule for the following two reasons. First, there were a large class of verbs in Old Japanese, which did not make the Final-Nominal distinction (Yo-dan katsuyo verbs), to begin with. Second, the verbs which used to make this distinction underwent a historical change towards a complete merger of the two conjugation forms in the periods following the time of Old Japanese. (Refer to Akiba (1978) for more detailed discussion on this historical process.) Having developed from the tanka during the period when the two forms were still fluctuating, the haiku allowed itself to exploit this indeterminate situation for metric purposes.

If we accept the generalization that *kana* is a sentence final particle placed after an NP constituent in haiku, all the haiku with *kana* can be regarded as nominal sentences in the form of (NP - SFP), which is more than commonly found in colloquial Japanese.[7] Furthermore, by applying the same analysis for other similar but slightly different types of haiku, we will gain greater insight into haiku. Consider the following.

7. Hina no hi ni/
festival+doll ASS lanturn OBL
Inuki ga tamoto/ Kakaru nari.(Bu:124)
Inuki ASS sleeve hang COP
'Over the lantern for the festival doll, does hang Inuki's sleeve.'

8. Kari yuki-te/ Kado-ta
wild-goose go-& gate-rice+field
mo tooku/ Omowa-ruru. (Bu:155)
even far think-PASS=*URU*
'Wild geese have gone, And even the rice field near my gate seems far.'

The *nari* at the end of the haiku in (7), having full conjugation, is a regular copula of Classical Japanese and there is ample evidence that it occurs after a nominal clause for the purpose of adding to the degree of the assertiveness. The haiku in (8), ending with a verb which is undoubtedly in the Nominal Form (the Nominal Form of this verb is *omowa=ru*) is a bare nominal clause.

Transformational grammatical conventions conveniently enable a single formula such as that shown in (9) to capture these two patterns as well as the pattern with *kana*.

9. NP - (COPULA|SFP)

The parentheses crossing each other indicate that only one of the elements in parentheses can be optionally chosen.[8] That is, the formula in (9) is an abbreviation of the following three patterns.

9'. (A) NP - COPULA
(B) NP - SFP
(C) NP

These patterns are not as peculiar as they may appear. They can be regarded as variations of the copula sentence pattern ($(NP)_{SUB}$ - $(NP)_{PRED}$ - COPULA), given that Japanese allows both NP deletion and copula deletion with much greater freedom than most other languages. The NP in these patterns can be taken as a vacuous subject, which is automatically deleted in Japanese.[9]

This tendency that haiku prefers the predication of monimals over verbals becomes even more conspicuous when the haiku with *ya*, which are not treated in this paper, are taken into account. The questions to be asked next, then, would be: Why are predicate nominal sentences so overwhelmingly chosen for haiku? Why is it almost always in a subordinate clause--a relative clause (see (1) and (2)) or a nominal caluse (see (7) and (8))--when it occurs in haiku?

The notions of transitivity and grounding that have been brought to our attention anew in recent discourse studies

seem to provide a key to this question. Hopper and Thompson (1980), for instance, have attempted to show that the grammatical and semantical prominence of transitivity is derived from its characteristic discourse function: high transitivity is correlated with foregrounding, and low transitivity with backgrounding. A problem with existing studies of discourse is, as Hopper and Thompson point out, that they are based on limited types of discourse (mostly narratives). It is quite likely that in certain discourse genres other than narratives the relationship between transitivity and grounding is quite opposite, i.e., sentences with low transitivity are for the foregrounding part and those with high transitivity for the backgrounding part. A haiku seems to be a case in point. The crux of haiku lies in the rendering of a concrete image of a scene--the haiku in (1) describes a peaceful scene of a spring day with a temple bell and a butterfly that is comfortably settled and asleep on it, and the one in (2) a scene of complete serenity of an old pond accentuated by a momentary sound of a frog's jumping into the water, and so forth. Thus, haiku are often compared to paintings, especially to Chinese black and white paintings. The predominance of predicate nominal sentences in haiku will, then, be explained as follows: haiku, being single-sentence discourse, prefers a predicate with low transitivity (nominal predicate sentences are the lowest in transitivity) although it may use a verb predicate in the backgrounding part--in syntactically backgrounded clauses such as relative clauses and nominal clauses.

Turning now to the choice between the three nominal predicate sentence types (A), (B), and (C), there seem to be two factors that must be taken into consideration, meter and modality. The pattern (C) may be chosen over the other two largely for the metric reason that it saves two syllables. The choice between (A) and (B), on the other hand, should not be construed as metric since both kana and nari have the same number of syllables. There is a slight difference in the degree of assertiveness between kana and nari: nari makes a straightforward assertion that the statement is true and kana a relatively mild assertion. One may notice that the ka in kana are historically related to the dubitative ka, which is typically used in interrogative sentences in Modern Japanese and thus has the effect of making the statement rather suggestive. In this regard, the fact that Basho wrote the following two poems in the same occasion is interesting.

11. Yuugao ni/ Kometsuki yasumu/
moon+flower OBL rice-miller rest=

Aware nari. (Ba:390)
URU sad COP

'Near moon-flowers, A rice miller rests, that is sad!'

12. Yuugao ni/ Kometsuki yasumu/
moon+flower OBL rice-miller=URU

Aware kana. (Ba:394)
sad KANA

'Near moon flowers, A rice miller rests. That looks sad!'

Notice that (11) and (12) are exactly the same except that the first ends with copula nari and the second with sentence final particle kana. It seems that Basho was not able to make an immediate decision on the ending because the difference between the two endings is extremely subtle and yet crucial for the poetic effect.

In summary, the points that I have attempted to make are: (i) the haiku with kana are analyzed as (NP - SFP) and are structurally related to two other patterns (NP - COPULA) and (NP - Ø); (ii) the fact that the majority of haiku are nominal predicate sentences ties in with what has been said to be the general character of haiku: imagism; and (iii) the syntactic and semantic optionality in the choice between the three nominal predicate sentence patterns compensates for the rigidity of the metric constraints on haiku.

This study is in no way complete, but I hope I have shown that there are sufficient correlations between the aesthetic character of haiku and linguistic forms employed in haiku, and that investigations along the line suggested here will be beneficial not only for literary studies of haiku but also for a better understanding of language.

Notes

[1]I am very grateful to Alan Wolfe (University of Oregon) for his valuable comments on the preliminary version and to Brian Martel and Hewitt Reynolds for their generous assistance in the English translations of the haiku used as examples in this paper. I must also acknowledge that I referred to Henderson (1958), who made special efforts to preserve the linguistic characteristics of the originals in English translations.

[2]By "traditional haiku" I mean those which were composed within the tradition of 5-7-5 syllable constraint and related conventions.

[3]Examples are from Basho Ku-shu (1962) and Buson-shu: Issa-shu (1959), Iwanami's series of Japanese Classics in Literature (Iwanami Koten Bungaku Taikei). Ba and Bu after examples stand for Basho and Buson, respectively. The serial numbers are those given in the Iwanami series. In word-for-word English gloss, the following abbreviatory conventions are used: COP = copula; TOP = topic marker; SUB = subject marker; DO = direct object marker; OBL = oblique case marker; ASS = associative particle; PAST = past tense; PASS = passive; NOM =

nominalizer. For grammatical elements whose status is being questioned appear in the gloss in underlined capital letters. The U and URU connected to verbs by way of '=' indicate that the corresponding Japanese verbs are in the Final Form and the Nominal Form, respectively. The slashes placed in the haiku indicate phrae boundaries.

[4]I examined the first 202 haiku of Basho's and the first 274 of Buson's.

[5]The language of Nara and Heian periods (approximately 8-10th century) has been in actual use throughout the subsequent periods as a formal style. I use the term "Classical Japanese" in this stylistic sense and the term "Old Japanese" in historical contexts.

[6]Japanese has two types of adjectives which are quite different from each other in morphology. Refer to Kuno (1970).

[7]E.g., Taroo ga soo it-ta no {sa / ya}.
Taro SUB so say-PAST NOM SFP

'Taro said so.'

The pattern with sa is used by young male speakers and the one with yo by female speakers in informal situations. In formal situations, desu, a formal copula, appears after the nominalizer no.

[8]This formula is not applicable for the general grammar of Japanese as it stands since nominal sentences with both COPULA and SFP are quite common in spoken Japanese. The rule for Japanese grammar in general need be modified as shown below so that both of the optional elements can be simultaneously chosen.

NP - (COPULA) - (SFP)

The reason that the nominal sentences utilized in haiku are restricted in this particular way seems to be self-explanatory given the metric constraint of 5-7-5 syllables; a haiku has such a limited length that it can hardly afford to let lexically null morphemes occupy a large part (possibly four syllables) of the last phrase.

[9]Chafe (1970) points out that sentences such as It's hot and It's Tuesday involve nothing but predication and that the it in these sentences is a surface element, and he proposes to specify those predicates that do not have a specific subject in the semantic representation as "ambient." Ambient predicates most typically describe "all encompassing states" or "total environment." The Japanese subjectless sentence patterns can be semantically analyzed as "ambient sentences." A haiku is in many cases a presentation of the total environment of the poet.